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GOLDEN EAGLE MOBBED WHILE PREYING ON COMMON RAVEN

by

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The Common Raven (*Corvus corax*) has seldom been recorded as a prey item of the Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) although the two species regularly occur together. Olendorff (1976) reported only two ravens in over 1,000 avian prey items for the Golden Eagle. This note reports an apparent predation attempt and subsequent mobbing episode involving the two species.

At ca 1000, on 17 June 1981, while driving in the mountains of central Arizona, I approached a group of 5 ravens mobbing a Golden Eagle in the roadway. The eagle, with wings outstretched, stood on a sixth raven. The ravens made repeated rushes at the eagle, thrusting and jabbing at its wings and body. Twice during this interaction, individual ravens jumped onto the back of the eagle and tugged on back and neck plumage for several seconds. Although no feathers were dislodged during these attacks, the eagle was visibly jostled and several times had to flap its wings to maintain balance. This mobbing continued for ca 5 min until the eagle, frightened by the approach of my vehicle, left the captured raven in the roadway and flew ca 150 m into a large arroyo where it perched low, out of sight in a grove of palo-verde trees (*Cercidium* sp.). The mobbing ravens, calling loudly, followed the eagle closely and perched in the upper branches of the same palo verde grove. Two ravens took off immediately after landing near the eagle and began soaring ca 10 m above while making repeated stoops on the eagle. The other ravens remained perched in the palo verde grove and continued to call frequently. No more actual attacks were made on the eagle and within 10 min, all 5 ravens were soaring above the eagle. The ravens then moved south until lost to view behind a low ridge. The eagle was absent when the grove was inspected ca 10 min later. The injured raven lay in the roadway ca 3 min but escaped my initial approach by crawling into a nearby bush. It was identified as a recently fledged juvenile. Later, the bird flew awkwardly across the mountain slope and was lost.

During the observation period, the ravens effectively prevented the eagle from plucking or killing the captured raven. While this observation was perhaps unusual, it suggests that mobbing behavior by the Common Raven can prevent predation on ravens by Golden Eagles.

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